



# AMA President Barbara L. McAneny, MD: Pushing for a better health system

SEP 11, 2018

Staff News Writer

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The AMA “Members Move Medicine” series profiles a wide variety of doctors, offering a glimpse into the passions of women and men navigating new courses in American medicine.

**On the move with:** AMA President Barbara L. McAneny, MD, an oncologist in private practice in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**AMA member since:** 1987.

**What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine:** I like people and I like science. I was a math major, and when I was considering careers, medicine seemed a great choice. I have never regretted it!

**How I move medicine:** One patient at a time—when you take care of the patient in front of you. When you work for all patients everywhere, trying to make the system work better. When you encourage a young person to make medicine their career. And when you advocate for physicians to retake control of health care.

**What I do to succeed as a leader:** I work really hard, I read everything I can and, hopefully, I have learned how to frame my ideas so that other people agree with them.

**My most notable accomplishment as a leader in medicine:** Being AMA president and receiving a Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) award for the oncology medical home are both accomplishments I am very proud of. Building my practice, the New Mexico Cancer Center, is a close second.

**Notable organized medicine leadership positions and awards:** Receiving the CMMI award for the Community Oncology Medical Home model. Serving on the American Society of Clinical Oncology board of directors, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ Practicing Physician Advisory Council, as well as the AMA Council on Medical Service and the AMA Board of Trustees—and now, of course, the AMA presidency.

**Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine:** Pick a specialty that speaks to your heart and your mind—making money is not that important. As a cancer doctor, when I am talking with patients about the end of their life, they never say they wish they had a bigger house or a fancier car. They always wish they had left an impact on the people around them. So, I decided to live my life to make an impact on the people around me.

**Aspect of my work that means the most:** When I help a cancer patient manage the scariest thing they have ever faced, I feel like I really accomplished something! And the other part is when I figure out how to solve a problem facing the practice and, therefore, facing our patients. Creating the oncology medical home and proving it keeps patients out of the hospital because they are healthier is

enormously satisfying.

But the high point of my professional life was being inaugurated as AMA president.

**How I advocate for physicians and patients:** I have submitted another idea to the Health and Human Services' Physician-Focused Payment Model Technical Advisory Committee. I want to continue to change how health care is delivered.

I have worked for public health issues and I created the New Mexico Cancer Center Foundation that helps patients with the non-medical costs of having cancer. When patients are going through treatment, I don't want them to lose their house. I cannot imagine anything worse than taking chemo while living in your car. The foundation has paid patient bills of almost \$1 million.

**My hope for medicine's future, and how it will shape my legacy as AMA president:** I hope to see a health care system that works for poor people. If we can take care of poor people with affordable, accessible, compassionate care, the rich ones will be easy!

I want to see more people going into private practice. It is a great career, with less burnout and more ability to shape how you deliver the care you want to give. Private practice is the low-cost high-quality alternative.

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